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THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC.

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VIEWS HERE AND THERE.

Important Notice.

In the fall of 1898 the editor of this paper became convinced that when *THE COLLECTOR* stopped publication on the death of its brilliant editor, Mr. Alfred Trumble, there was a void in critical art journalism,—a void most distinctly felt by artist, dealer, collector, and amateur alike.

He thereupon secured the option on the good-will of that journal; and later, aided by "The Art Collector Publishing Company," the old "Collector" was revived.

Unfortunately the gentleman owning the majority of stock in this publishing company had other aims than the issuance of an honest, fearless, and absolutely unbiased periodical. The editor at last came to the conclusion that the control exercised by this gentleman did not permit of manly independence and honest convictions.

He has therefore relinquished the aid of "The Art Collector Publishing Company," and will hereafter conduct his journal, under the above title, solely with the assistance of well-known literary men.

DAVID C. PREYER,
Editor and Publisher.

Kindly notice the subscription blank on page 13. All contributions, communications, exchanges, and subscriptions should be sent to the editor and publisher by name; all checks made payable to him.

The many letters of encouragement received these last days lead me to ask all those interested in this paper to fill in with names the blank on page 15.

ART IN CARICATURE.—Like a burr sticking to garments in an autumn ramble is the clever caricature to fasten upon professional or lay man some particular idiosyncrasy. "The pen is mightier than the sword," but greater than these is the pencil. A sharp editorial, a scathing diatribe, may be lived down; the printed word in the world's hurry may be forgotten; but the corroding acidity of the satiric skit in pictorial shape will cling forever. The one appeals to the intellect merely; the caricature to the intellect, the eye, and, worst of all, to the sense of humor. We may forget the designation of the great chancellor as "the man of blood and iron," but we shall never forget the three hairs on the crown of his head.

American journalism, however, is just now travestying the artistic side of pictorial satire by those who by courtesy are called artists, but whose bullock-brained efforts scrawl and dab the vilest imitations of artistic design upon the pages of the most contemptible screeds of our daily press. The bad artist has been made to replace the good reporter, and the result has not been beneficial to metropolitan journalism. Every paper booms its own man and makes him the Michelangelo of its staff, while in truth C. S. Bush is about the only man now on the dailies worth placing in the artistic ranks. Nelan imitates Bush. Davenport is often crude, cruel, and coarse; his best thoughts seem to be inspired by the efforts of Thos. Nast of long, long ago—for instance, the suit of silver dollars which he put on Senator Hanna, was taken from the back of "Boss" Tweed, to whom Nast had fitted it.

And may the judgment day have mercy on Yellow Kid Out-cast!

* * *

The first efforts to start a comic paper in this city were abortive in the later forties. There was *Judy*, edited by Dr. Marshall, the dentist of Grand Street and the theatrical adviser of the famous Billy Mitchell of the old Olympic Theatre. It only lasted six months. *Yankee Doodle* was published, and a failure. Another humorous paper, *John Donkey*, ceased braying before it had really made itself heard. John Brougham, the journalist, playwright, actor, and artist, started *The Bubble*, and it burst in a literal sense on the second number. Then came *The Lantern*, edited by Brougham and Thomas Powell, which commenced in 1852, lasted two years, and then expired—as Brougham put it: "It died of too much and too many brains." It certainly had a most brilliant staff of contributors, of which my old friend in Jersey, Dr. Thomas Dunn English, was one.

Frank Leslie's *Budget of Fun*, started in 1857, lasted for

twenty years in its original shape, under the editorial charge of Powell. *Vanity Fair* was issued on the last day of the year 1859 by a firm consisting of Frank J. Thompson and Harry L. Stephens, the artist, of whom one contributed the funds, the other the sketches. A twenty-five dollar prize was paid for the title after a contest, in which *Puck* was one of the rejected captions. *Vanity Fair* was the first in the East to print the Artemus Ward ramblings, while John McLenon furnished some of its best cartoons. It expired on the 4th of July, 1863. The most pronounced success of artistically satirical papers has been *Puck* under the elder Joseph Keppler.

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The dean of the pictorial satirists is Thomas Nast. He was born at Landau, in Bavaria, in 1840, but brought to America when a little boy. At the age of fifteen he was already drawing for the papers. Previous to the war he had only been known for his by no means high-class pictures of Victor Emanuel's Italian campaign in *The Illustrated London News*. Artists laughingly said that he made the campaign in the big-nosed king's vest-pocket, in allusion to his small stature. The Harpers gave him employment on war pictures, and the public will recall his extraordinary effects of black and white battles, explosions, trenches ghastly with dead, which appeared in the *Weekly*. The original of his excellent "Lincoln's Visit to Richmond, Va.," is now on exhibition at the Grolier Club. He was, in a minor way, an American Doré. After the war he took to cartooning and painting, and is settled now in Morristown, N. J. He was never a good draughtsman, but he had an extraordinary knack of catching character, and an eye for strong and striking effects. Of late years he has not shown very much.

A. B. Frost gives to-day clever sketches of American character which are strongly shaded and wholly expressive. Sullivant's large heads on small bodies hit off human foibles to perfection. I have spoken already of Hy Mayer's individual work of supreme excellence. The political cartoons of Victor Gillam, Grant Hamilton, Young Keppler often present features of artistic merit. The grotesque, unnatural presentations by Zimmerman—"Zim," as he signs—deserve mention. Kemble's "Coons" may not be passed, while the scenes from daily life by F. Oppen are marked by individual conception and trenchant humor.

Our national life offers a productive soil for the propagation of those incongruities to be interpreted by an instrument as impertinent as the matutinal crayon. But this crayon must be educated, else it will carry, with the sally it proclaims, a perverted taste to the multitude. The highest talent is required for this particular branch of art—literary taste, philosophic mind, keen eye, a sure pencil, perfect technique. To excel here is often to found an institution, like the London *Punch*, which has only survived the death of Mark Lemon by the rare business tact of the publishers.

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Bolstered art must be weak. The gimcracks of press-agent schemes are always disgusting when applied to that which has intrinsic merit. I can't tell, however, whether I pity or scorn the methods pursued in displaying certain two pictures by peculiar lighting effects. I refer to Delorme's "Blacksmith," now shown in a Sixth Avenue department store, and the Brooklyn Museum "Rembrandt." By the way, it must not be understood that this Rembrandt belongs to the Brooklyn Museum; it is only loaned by a gentleman, well known for his large collection of works of art, but is, I have been told, for sale.

The "Blacksmith" and the "Rembrandt" are kept away from the beholder by a railing, four ingenious planes to aid the perspective and a set of concealed reflectors throwing a full glare of light upon the painting, materially helping by extraneous means the light effect, which in good painting is obtained by technical methods. I have never been able to closely examine this "Blacksmith" and "Rembrandt," so feel disinclined to judge whether the illusionary strength of these paintings is real or only intended to dexterously cover defects.

In a recent criticism of the Dagnan-Bouveret picture at the American Artists' Exhibition there occurred this sentence:

"Any portraying of Christ must either portray Him as divine, which for a century, or so we have been growing out of, or must portray Him as human, which of late we have been growing into."

This is a gratuitous fling and insult to the vast majority of thinking people in civilization. It is an echo of the libertine spirit and sacrilegious sansculottism of a century ago, and even then the sneaking slur was old. In fact, it can be traced in a trickling, poisonous stream throughout the Christian centuries, higher and higher up to Judas—but he repented and hung himself.

The pasquinade of introducing theological problems into art criticism is utterly out of place. Art criticism must be very shallow and ignorant indeed if, to hide its paucity of thought and knowledge, it has to lug in at random personal animosities and acrimonious attacks.

* * *

As I had already stated, the Harris-Holbrook-Blakeslee Collection has provided one of the important events in the art world. The sale is taking place while this number is going through the press, but in the next number a full list of prices will be given.

The Van Dycks, the Pieter Codde (Van Dyck's contemporary), the Claudio Coello, the Mierevelt, were but representative of the magnificent array of canvases by the Old Masters. Nor were the modern men of less calibre. I have already referred to some of the works of the so-called Barbizon men. It must, however, be said that the few Americans were not in the least overshadowed by the strong company they were in. Bogert's canal view is powerful; De Haven's landscapes breathe the air of woodland and stream, while George Inness's "Autumn Sunset" was one of those *paysageries* of remarkable breadth which we have from his strongest manner.

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If there is any one who still claims there is no American school or who ridicules the efforts of our native painters—for there are such as prefer old daubs and foreign bisques, nor can they see aught good in what is done next door—have you, my misguided friend, recently been about? Have you seen the twelve landscape painters at the American Art Galleries? Have you seen the twenty-four gems at the last Lotos Club exhibition? Even the exhibition of American paintings recently held at the Fifth Avenue Art Galleries and sold there would have opened your eyes. It were well also for you to visit now at once the Academy and Society of American Artists' exhibitions. Surely our men are coming to the fore.

* * *

The series of lectures on the "Graphic Arts" by Professor Leigh Hunt, given before the teachers of New York at the City College, were concluded in my last number with the lecture on "Lithography." These lectures have been eminently practical and were greatly enjoyed by those that heard them, as well as the readers of these reports, letters received by me attesting to this latter fact. Next winter the doctor will take up in this course some branch of the Graphic Arts, and reports, revised by himself, will regularly appear again in this journal.

* * *

While we accord our dead artists the meed of praise, and honor them with ever-increasing rivalry for the possession of their pictures, it would be well to remember that many of these men received but a mere pittance for their works while they were alive. If collectors had been more shrewd and connoisseurs more discerning, they could have acquired the pictures for which they now willingly pay their thousands for as many hundreds. But can collectors not learn by experience? There are men now with us whose works command prices that are but a fraction of what some day these canvases will bring. An intelligent searching of the Academy and Society of American Artists' exhibitions will reveal pictures the purchase of which

may be considered investments. Who will doubt but that Horatio Walker's "Oxen Drinking," to take but a single instance, is intrinsically worth at least double the price for which it now may be had? Auction rooms do not furnish the best bargains in the purchase of the works of living artists. It is gratifying to state that the sales at both the above-mentioned exhibitions are satisfactory.

* * *

I was told at the Reform Club that some legislative action is being prepared to suppress auctions of spurious paintings. This is excellent. A few years ago, Mayor Strong withdrew the license of a certain rug auctioneer; for antique rugs are peddled much the way paintings are hawked. The issue, however, must be kept distinct and clear. Where the auction house provides the lots, and often bids them in, to have them appear again in a subsequent sale, a fake auction is consummated and a fraud upon the public is perpetrated.

But there is another side. Auctioneers are not all rogues. Many there are who act merely as agents for those whose collections they sell. Theirs is no expert knowledge, nor need they have it. They announce openly and honestly that the articles are sold just as they are, without reserve of any kind, and if the public is "done," it is by those who supply the material of the sale. Legislation, to lay the axe at the root of the tree, must cut deeper than the auction flag.

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The supplement which is inserted in this number represents one of the most important pictures found in the Blakeslee Galleries. It is Van Dyck's portrait of "Duke Wolfgang, Wilhelm von Pfalz-Nieburg, Prince Elector Palatine," which for many years was in the collection of Prince Turn und Taxis. This painting created a sensation at the great Van Dyck Exhibition held at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886-87, while in 1897 it was exhibited at the exhibition of Van Dyck and Old Masters arranged at Brussels by the Count de Flandres and other members of the Belgian nobility. The dog in the painting is a magnificent animal, painted with that same love which Van Dyck showed in the canine companions of many of his portraits.

* * *

POPULARIZING ART is the mission of cultured philanthropy. That art in its various forms exerts a powerfully refining influence it is hardly necessary to argue, but this influence is, comparatively speaking, restricted to the class least in actual need of it. To intellects developed and active it is a stimulus and a pleasure that in a degree, it is true, is necessary; but to those in the vast ranks of the majority whose minds are more or less dormant under the daily stress of struggling for the supply of physical needs and who have not the means to enjoy the pleasures of art, its possibilities are in the nature of an awakening and a new life. Art is a gentle, quiet, but tremendous force. It educates us, helps us to appreciate many beauties in nature which, before viewing them in a picture, had been passed by unobserved; it brings vividly before us scenes from other countries; it assists us to use our understanding with our eyesight; in short, to think intelligently.

The idea that the people—the poorer classes—should be educated so as to appreciate art has always prevailed in France; but it is only of late years that the importance of this branch of education has been recognized by English-speaking countries. There are, of course, art galleries in nearly all great cities open to all; but they aim rather to cater to the better classes, and little effort has been made until lately to reach or interest the poor man. Only in the last few years has an attempt been made to provide an exhibition of pictures for the poor; and the success met with and the good results flowing from it have far surpassed all expectations.

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The experiment was first tried in East London in England, at the People's Palace. It was regarded as a visionary venture at the time, for while it was admitted that in France, Italy, and Ger-

many even the lowest classes could understand and appreciate art, it was the prevalent opinion in England that the poor people of the East End of London, the costers and others of their type, were incapable of admiring paintings or statuary. It looked for a while as though this opinion was correct, for in spite of the fact that the picture galleries in the People's Palace were beautiful and every effort was made to attract people there, they were left nearly unnoticed. Day after day the rooms were empty and it seemed as though the London poor did not care for art. It took a long time to get them there, and for that purpose the exhibition was continued much longer than intended, but the works of art displayed, all of which were loaned, gradually won even the duller minds, and the exhibition proved a success after all. To-day art loan exhibitions are a feature of the East End of London. They have accomplished wonders there in inculcating in the poorer classes a knowledge of and love for the beautiful.

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To bring genuine art in its highest forms to the multitude is a good work in the most emphatic sense of the term. To contribute toward spreading its influence among the masses is a distinct and lovely charity. Public art galleries and free concerts have a distinct public educational value that is too often nonappreciated, because their results are too subtle for quick and material perception. Many deprecate such missionary work on the ground that it is sentimental and trivial, compared to the pressing physical necessities of the lower classes. Such theorists look on these efforts with a sneer, preferring what they call doing practical good. Yet the mind is as real as the body, and satisfaction of its needs just as practical. One requires food as absolutely as the other, or it will starve; from the men and women in whom the animal nature finds no check in the mental we get our ignorant, our paupers, our criminals, our social brutes, not our successful people—our inventors, our thinkers, our social benefactors. If art had no mission to perform, the love of it would have no existence. The mistake is to look on it as a luxury, and not a necessity of life. An art-loving people must be an intelligent people, and less addicted than others to grosser pleasures. To awaken a love and appreciation of it, to provide opportunities for its public enjoyment, to increase facilities for the development of obscure talent, is as practical a labor as it is noble.

Much has been done in this city, Brooklyn, Boston, and Chicago by "neighborhood guilds" and loan exhibitions to give enjoyment and the rudiments of culture to those who, with an equal capacity to appreciate, have the least opportunities.

* * *

The reviews of the various exhibitions take up so much space that many contributed articles have of necessity been crowded out. Some of these are of surpassing interest, but will keep until the next number.

The critical review of New York exhibitions I consider of vital importance, because many of the works there shown turn up again in distant cities, where the judgment passed here oft serves to guide and instruct.

Articles on private collections in cities outside New York will soon appear, while efforts are made to make this journal not metropolitan, but cosmopolitan in its grasp of the news of the art world and of collectorship.

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